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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JIM WEBB, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Everlasting God, who commanded light from darkness and divided the waters into sea and dry land, great and wonderful are Your works. By Your power and might, sustain our Senators this day. Lord, give them the courage to embrace the good and to avoid the evil. When they are fainthearted, strengthen them. When they are weak, support them. When they feel doubts, infuse them with faith in Your power, mercy, and grace. Transform their work into an expression of their worship of You as You help them make a renewed commitment to excellence in words and deeds.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JIM WEBB led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 16, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JIM WEBB, a Senator

from the Commonwealth of Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WEBB thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 146, which is the legislative vehicle for the lands bill. At 5:30 p.m. today, we will have a cloture vote on the motion to proceed.

On the lands bill issue, Dr. COBURN is supposed to give me some amendments today that we will take a look at and see whether we are going to be able to work something out to have some amendments offered. As my colleagues know, we are back again with this issue. This represents a number of bills that have been held up—a number of these bills have been held up for some time over the past year. In the House, an issue came up, and they amended it and put it on the consent calendar, and it failed by two votes. They didn't get the two-thirds, so it comes back here. I hope we can work something out; otherwise, we will just proceed as we have in the past. Sometime tomorrow, we will be on the bill, probably at about 4 o'clock. We will offer an amendment at that time and proceed to do what we need to do. Dr. COBURN has indicated to me that he won't require reading of the amendment, which could take a lot of time, but we will see what we can work out with him and move forward as quickly as we can.

ADDRESSING AMERICA'S PRIORITIES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this weekend, we learned that AIG doled out \$165 million in bonuses to their senior executives—bonuses paid for with taxpayer-funded bailout dollars. With millions of Americans out of work, staying up nights trying to figure out how to make this week's paycheck last until the next paycheck, wondering how they will make the next mortgage payment or pay the overdue bill—maybe even a tuition bill—these executive bonuses are beyond even outrageous. I don't know what a term is that is more definitive than "outrageous," but "outrageous" does the trick. These bonuses being paid are outrageous.

President Obama has instructed Secretary Geithner to pursue every legal avenue to address this grievous abuse of taxpayer money. I applaud that effort. Our financial sector will never heal unless the financial companies that helped create this economic crisis begin to regain the public trust. The actions of AIG do just the opposite, and every American is justified in their outrage at this breach of public trust.

President Obama was asked recently about the role of bipartisanship in addressing America's priorities. He said that it is the job of the majority to be inclusive and of the minority to be constructive.

In the early days of the 111th Congress, Democrats have worked to be inclusive. We have achieved considerable legislative success: passing a major lands bill which we will return to later this week, as I have indicated; the children's health insurance bill to provide health coverage to millions of children of low-income families; the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act to ensure the principle of equal pay for equal work; the President's Economic Recovery Act to begin stabilizing our economy and addressing the fiscal crisis this President inherited; and, of course, we passed the Omnibus appropriations bill,

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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